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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

VOLUME 15 SAN FRANCISCO, OCTOBER, 1933 NUMBER 10

A Chance Observation

Occasionally a bird will stray from its natural habitat and alight momentarily in surroundings so dissimilar to its accustomed place that its identification will puzzle the observer, unless a very close-up view is secured. As an illustration, on September 16, 1933, Mrs. Stephens and I noticed a strange bird executing a very rapid and erratic flight close to the surface of Spreckels Lake, in Golden Gate Park. Suddenly it landed in the middle of the broad path bordering the north side, where it remained absolutely motionless for several minutes.

Taking advantage of the shrubbery along the path, we approached within forty feet of this strange visitor. Training our binoculars on it, we saw it was none other than a Surf-bird, probably one from the Cliff House rocks where this species is commonly seen.

Our curiosity satisfied, we stepped out into the open. Instantly it took flight, performing, at first, much as it had before, then with seeming reassurance it circled higher and higher and finally flew in a straight line back to the ocean.

Albert B. Stephens, San Francisco, September 25, 1933.

A Post-Mortem Examination of a Red-wing Blackbird

One morning I was in the territory about Benicia with a Boy Scout, checking his knowledge of birds, preparatory to certifying him as deserving of a merit badge in bird study. Among other observations we found an immature San Francisco Red-wing probably about two months out of the nest, caught by its foot in a fence wire, and swinging head downward in the breeze. One of the toes of its left foot had caught between two points of one of the barbs in such a way as to cause a leverage of the leg against one of the points, and a strong wind prevailing at this season had probably assisted in forcing the struggling bird forward, snapping the leg just above the foot, and eventually wrapping the leg one complete revolution about the wire. There was evidence of the bird's efforts to release itself even after hanging with head downward, for when found the bird was swinging by the tendons of the broken leg, not having been dead very long.

It is customary with me to investigate what a bird freshly dead has been eating, and such an examination on this bird proved interesting also. The bird had had a well-balanced meal, corresponding to the meat and vegetables of man,—the stomach contents being a juicy grasshopper (considerably larger than the bird's bill), flanked with nine tender grains of wheat, the latter husked but with several husks present. Besides being a balanced diet, we noted that it was also a compensatory one judged from the economic viewpoint of man,—the damage caused by eating nine grains of wheat being theoretically offset by the capture of a destructive grasshopper.

Such is the result of our post-mortem examination of this unfortunate creature. Although his ending was tragical, I believe that, with very few exceptions, the ultimate happening in the life of every wild bird is a tragedy.

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. July 15, 1933.

Birding around Salt Lake City, Utah

Our first excursion in search of representative birds about Salt Lake City was a valley walk, described in the August, 1933, issue of "The Gull." Our second, to the mountains, will necessitate some help from an automobile.

We shall visit City Creek Cañon and the contiguous foot-hills on account of accessibility, variety of range, and the probability of obtaining a larger list of species there than elsewhere. It was at the mouth of this canyon that the Mormon pioneers established themselves and evolved the irrigation program which in time reclaimed much of the west. Here Brigham Young built his home, and only a block from his "Beehive House" on Cañon Road stands the only remaining cobblestone wall intact that once surrounded this early settlement.

For years the one motive possessed by all was to take something out of the canyon, never to put anything back. The creek was first diverted for irrigation purposes, then appropriated for city water, leaving a dry creek bottom further up with each succeeding step of civic progress. Builders gouged the canyon sides for gravel and left ugly pits. People helped themselves to both dead wood and the living. Boys' bonfires and other carelessness from time to time burned nearly all the hillside shrubbery in the lower portion of the canyon.

In late years an entirely different attitude possesses us, and, led by a group of our progressive women, a great effort has been made to preserve what natural beauty has been left in this canyon and to restore its vegetation. The fruition of these efforts is "Memorial Grove," which graces the sides of the canyon east of our Capitol building. The barren hillsides of a few years ago are being planted with trees, shrubs and grass of a character which will provide both cover and food to a growing population of summer and winter birds.

Our entrance to Memorial Grove at about 5 a. m. on a day in June would be hailed by alarm calls from the California Quail, and a chorus by Linnets, Siskins, Chipping, House, Lark and Song Sparrows, an occasional Pale Goldfinch, Spotted and Green-tailed Towhees, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Yellow Warblers, Warbling Vireos, Catbirds and Robins. Flickers are always in evidence, also Long-tailed Chickadees, Western Night Hawks and Rough-winged Swallows. A pair of Mountain Bluebirds nest in a yard just out of the park, and along the ridges where there are stands of sage, one can catch the songs of Vesper and Brewer Sparrows, and occasionally the Sage Thrashers.

About three miles up the canyon we encounter some conglomerate cliffs that house the Rock and Canyon Wrens, the Prairie Falcon and Sparrow Hawk. Horned Larks range out from here and American Magpies and Mourning Doves are common among the hillside shrubbery.

After six miles the canyon becomes more rugged and narrow, the mountains rising over 10,000 feet. The vegetation changes somewhat in character and while many of the birds of the lower canyon continue with us, we observe others not found below. This brings us within the range of the Tolmie, Audubon and Orange-crowned Warblers, the Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, the Mountain Chickadee, Water Ouzel, Western Tanager and the Audubon Hermit Thrush. Here House Wrens and Violet-green Swallows have chosen deserted woodpeckers' holes to nest in. The Flicker and Red-naped Sapsucker are the only woodpeckers I have found nesting in this canyon.

Next, Flycatcher puzzles present themselves. We have at least three if not four forms of the smaller species — just to venture a guess: Hammond, Wright, Traill and Western. Broad-tailed Hummingbirds are common from here to the summit. Black-headed Jays range up the mountain sides, and in adjoining gulches where water is present we have the Ruffed and Dusky Grouse, the latter in considerable numbers. I have also found the Cooper Hawk nesting in this area.

Another four miles and the character of the canyon again changes. As we pass the crest of the range, the mountains are lower, the slopes longer and more

rolling, while the canyon becomes one little mountain meadow after another almost to its end. Bordering willow thickets provide a suitable habitat for the Slate-colored Fox and Gambel Sparrows. The Gray-headed Junco is also common in these meadows though the books place it in the more desert ranges. The Pink-sided Junco, which is the junco of these mountains and occurs in great numbers in the lower canyon during migration, I have so far failed to discover in this breeding area.

On the gentler slopes near the summit are some fine stands of sage and on lucky days one may flush the Sage Grouse. The Swainson Hawk, though more common in lower altitudes, nests among the aspens and hunts along the open slopes. In the nearby conifers are found the beautiful Rocky Mountain Grosbeak. I have seen Golden Eagles, Saw-whet and Pygmy Owls in spring and fall. They may have been present only as migrants, though I believe they nest here. The Great Horned Owl has been seen here also, though I have not seen it.

Other birds seen in the lower canyon in fall and spring that probably nest in limited numbers are: Pileolated Warbler, Townsend Solitaire, Rocky Mountain Creeper, Cassin Purple Finch, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Wood Pewee, Woodhouse Jay and Batchelder Woodpecker. I have also observed White-throated Swifts about the conglomerate but have no evidence that they nest in this canyon, though I believe they nest elsewhere in our mountains. I have also observed one Winter Wren.

This concludes my survey of City Creek Cañon to date. Doubtless this list of breeding birds will be augmented not only by those already mentioned as probably nesting but also by the addition of the Rocky Mountain Hairy Woodpecker, Slender-billed and Red-breasted Nuthatches and Clarke Nutcracker that I have found nesting in another nearby canyon. Still others may be found from time to time though I feel there will be few whose numbers will be great enough to warrant their consideration on a representative list of City Creek Cañon breeding birds.

C. W. Lockerbie, Salt Lake City, Utah. August 15, 1933.

September Field Trip was taken by twenty-six members and twelve guests, on Sunday, the 17th, to Alameda and Bay Farm Island. The morning was gray with a strong southwest wind.

The group assembled at 11:30, but as the tide would not be right for shore birds until about 2:30 p. m., a visit was made to Lincoln Park to look for land birds. Those observed here were: Black-crowned Night Heron, Shrike, Yellow Warbler, English Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, California Jay, Pine Siskin and Bush-tit.

After luncheon we went down to the shore line, where we added the California Gull and Savannah Sparrow to our list. At about 2:30 p. m., the shore birds began to arrive, first Marbled Godwits, followed closely by Willets and a lone Black-bellied Plover. Then came more Godwits and Willets, the Godwits outnumbering all other species seen here.

Crossing over the bridge to Bay Farm Island, we added to our list: Anna Hummingbird, Killdeer, Long-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Northern Phalarope, Sparrow Hawk, Snowy Plover, Horned Lark, Cliff and Barn Swallows, Meadowlark, Brewer Blackbird and Song Sparrow.

It was evidently an off-day for birding; especially was the number of shore birds quite meager. The species observed for the entire trip totaled twenty-six.

Laura A. Stephens, Historian.

Audubon Notes

October Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 12th, at 8 p. m., room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Dr. Gayle Pickwell of the San Jose State Teachers College. Subject, "Some Observations of Birds of Sequoia National Park." The lecture will be illustrated.

October Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 15th, to Lake Merced, San Francisco. East Bay members should reach San Francisco about 8:30 a. m. Take Municipal car K, transfer to M car at St. Francis Loop beyond Twin Peaks Tunnel, get off at Junipero Serra Boulevard, where party will form at 9:30. Bring luncheon. Leader, Chas. A. Bryant.

New Literature: "History and Present Status of the Breeding Colonies of the White Pelican," by Ben H. Thompson. Obtainable from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

September Meeting: The 193rd regular meeting was held on September 14th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with forty-one members and guests present. President Charles A. Bryant presiding.

A new member was elected, namely: Mrs. B. H. Cook of San Francisco.

Field observations were reported as follows:

Eddie McClintock: Cedar Waxwings, San Mateo, September 11th.

Commander and Mrs. Parmenter: Juvenile Surf Birds, Cliff House, August 22nd, one Ruddy and six Black Turnstones, San Mateo Bridge, September 8th; Willets 1000±, Long-billed Dowitchers 25+, Marbled Godwit 500±, Wilson Phalarope 4, Northern Phalarope 1000+, two Snowy Plover, White Pelican 60±, August 29th; Semipalmated Plover 7, Black-bellied Plover 300±, Avocet 6, American Egret 1, San Mateo and Dumbarton Bridges, September 8th; Canada Geese, San Andreas and Crystal Springs Lakes, 5, September 5th, 125+ 8th, 200± 13th.

Robert Taylor: Bald Eagle and young, Big Sur, September 2nd; Black-throated Gray Warbler and about twelve Hermit Warblers, Oakland Scout Camp, September 5th.

Mr. William H. Behle of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, delivered a very interesting lecture, entitled "The Bird Life of the Great Salt Lake." Mr. Behle described Bear River Refuge, which is on the migrating route of many birds and is also the breeding ground of many others.

He told of visiting Egg Island in the Great Salt Lake and seeing approximately 4,000 White Pelicans, 20,000 California Gulls and numerous Double-crested Cormorants and Treganza Herons.

The Pelicans occupied the level places on the east side of the island. They like isolation and if disturbed by man during the nesting season, they leave their young to shift for themselves and go out into the water. At such times the young gather in groups and move around from place to place, many of the younger and weaker ones perishing from being trampled upon.

Lack of space here prevents a full report of this most interesting talk, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the members and guests present.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....Chas. A. Bryant.....150 Franklin St., San Francisco
Corresponding Secretary.....C. B. Lastreto.....260 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.
Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.
Subscription to monthly Bulletin, $1.00 per year. Single copies, 15c.
Membership dues, payable January 1st, $3.00 per year.
Student memberships, $1.50 per year. Life memberships, $50.00
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